

# A "Horse" on the Public

Inside Secrets of Stage Hypnotism Disclosed by an Outsider

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**T**HERE are horses and horses—mostly quadrupeds, but a few bipeds. Among the latter is the rare "horse" of the stage hypnotist. He is a horse of another color—chiefly a "horse" on the public that pays its good money to see marvelous demonstrations of smooth Svenralis every time these mystic individuals appear at the opera house.

The hypnotists the public sees are from forty to a hundred per cent fakirs and from sixty to no per cent really hypnotists. Their methods are peculiar to themselves because their department of legerdemain is different from that of the man who makes an omelet in a hat and then returns the hat unharmed to the owner.

To succeed as a hypnotic attraction in the theater, the greatest pains must be taken with detail—as is indeed the case with the drama always and the stage presentation of hypnotism is really a drama having to do entirely with appeal to the audience. The most successful stage hypnotists spend thousands of dollars for the gowns of the woman in the case, look carefully after the theater lights, constantly feel the pulse of the audience like an actor reciting the soliloquy of Hamlet, and are constantly inventing new devices, some of which succeed and some of which fail on a try out.

#### Success depends on "horse."

**B**UT above all else success in theatrical hypnotism depends upon the horse. The stage hypnotist needs good horses, as the dramatic manager needs good actors. In the hypnotic stage world, a horse is an employee who comes out of the audience upon the stage and does the best stunts while pretending to be a farm hand or a railroad clerk. Like other actors they are of all grades of proficiency and command all kinds of salaries. A successful hypnotism entertainer will hardly let a first class horse resign on account of being underpaid.

These horses never travel in the same railroad coach with their employer; they never stop at the same hotel with him; they are very unobtrusive in their daily lives, sober, dignified, uncommunicative, and seldom seen except in mass meetings where many local citizens gather; they look and act the part of farm hand or clerk to perfection all the time they are out of their rooms.

They never go upon the stage as a subject merely on the general invitation given the audience by the hypnotist on the gang-plank placed over the drummer in the orchestra. They are real artists and deserve full recognition of their ability. Generally, they sit in a chosen neighborhood in the house. When recruits for subjects come slowly from the audience, the horse begins casually and quietly to suggest that the man by his side, before him, or behind him, go upon the stage. The man declines and only a little skillful urging is necessary to reverse the argument and leave the man trying to induce the horse himself to go up to be a subject. The really high class horse generally reluctantly agrees only on condition that the man go also. All this makes it clear to everybody in that part of the house that this horse is a genuine, honest, not too smart, local citizen, farm hand or clerk, and to suspect collusion between him and the man in a dress suit and an atmosphere of mystery, is preposterous on the face of it. But all fakirism is simply making the face of things different from the realities. After the first night, in week stands, the horse continues to go upon the stage because he is such a good subject that the professor running the show specially requests it as the horse leaves the semicircle at the end of the evening's entertainment.

#### One hypnotist has five "horses."

**T**HE hypnotist who has done the best work yet seen in America and fooled the leading medical men and psychologists of the East had five horses constantly on his payroll. Two of these were the best horses in the world, in all probability. What one of them did later will be told in detail.

He was discharged in the East because he had worked so long for his expert that the danger of discovery was becoming too great.



When the notice appeared on the medical college bulletin board, the students were eager for the "demonstration."

He was at once employed by another public hypnotist and ordered to join the show at Des Moines, North of St. Louis he met his superiors in the gentle art of fooling people and a gang made up as stockmen and farmers won his last cent at poker in the smoking car. That night he slept in the police station at the first change of cars, and next morning applied to a hospital for treatment. He happened to become a patient in my clinic and for the record gave his occupation as that of a paperhanger. He had a slight attack of malaria and was sent back to the police station for lodging.

#### A "horse's" confession.

**I**T chanced that I found him waiting for the car I caught to go down town. As we stood on the rear platform, I opened a conversation which was like this:

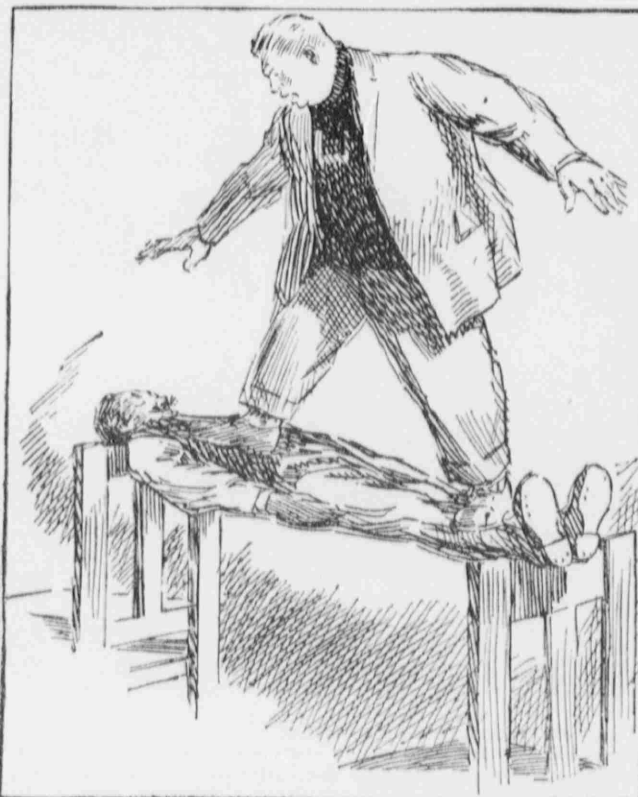
"What's your graft?"

"I don't understand you," he returned with a face as blank as a Chinaman's.

"What do you do?" I persisted.

"I'm a paperhanger," he replied gravely and quietly.

"Yes; I'm glad you said that in the clinic for the record; but you're a fakir. What's your stunt?"



A 325-pound student stood on the "horse's" middle.

"I'm a horse," he said very low, casually, and looking sideways at the houses we were passing. It was his final test after taking stock of me thoroughly thus far. The next question would determine how wise a guy I was—to continue to use the language of the world that has the most picturesque, accurate and forceful terminology of any profession or science.

"Who did you work with?" came next.

He named the noted lime-light hypnotist and answered other questions which showed my familiarity with the work of his former employer and my certainty that it was a fake. He said that another horse this eminent hypnotist had was his own superior, but that he claimed to be the second best horse in this country. The week before I had merely mentioned hypnotism as one method of producing anesthesia, in my lectures in the medical college, and there on the street car platform came an idea which was worked out as shall be told here.

A notice appeared on the college bulletin board that at a certain hour a lecture and demonstration on hypnotism would be given which all the classes might attend. The largest lecture room was filled with students. First came a dissertation on the nature of hypnotism, how it is produced,

the phenomena and its use in medicine and surgery. All these things were illustrated later upon the subject who sat in the arena and looked like a worker in the shoe factory.

After some suggestions causing the young man to embrace the professor of chemistry—himself an expert in hypnotism, both the science and the art, and hence invited to sit on the lecture platform—the real work of the seance began.

#### Burns did not hurt him.

**A**LIGHTED cigar was held hard against the subject's white skin on his forearm, and he was as calm as a sleeping babe. A threaded surgeon's needle was passed through his face from side to side, piercing both cheeks, only the right cheek bleeding as had been previously stated by the operator would occur. The subject was made rigid with head and heels on two chairs far apart, and a student now a practicing physician in San Francisco, and then weighing 325 pounds, stood on his middle without causing the least deflection of the living bridge. In short, everything which any reader of this ever saw done—and many other things—was done to that subject who acted exactly as every reader has seen hypnotic subjects act on the stage. Finally, with a natural tendency to dramatic effect I remarked the beautiful sunset over section A of the students' seats—his face showed peaceful appreciation of the scene; I found a little cloud on the horizon—and he was a little interested with facial expression; the cloud grew in my monologue—and he became successively serious, alarmed, afraid, badly scared and terrorized, expressing these phases of gradation and wonderful strength and accuracy; finally, in the running description he heard, the black, dangerous cloud up on the west wall parted, showing a bright light between the two halves, the light was seen to be brilliant flames, in which a shape appeared identified a minute later as the devil, and finally came the words:

"He's coming! He's coming! He's coming for you!"

#### "Horse" proves a great actor.

**A**VERY clear recollection of the greatest actors of the last quarter of a century, to both sides of John McCullough, does not prevent the asseveration that the face and pantomime of that young man over whom some passes had been made twenty minutes before surpassed any acting ever done in the emotional or tragic drama on any stage. At the final suggestion that the devil was coming out of the gates of hell to carry him away, he swerved a little as he stood, his face looked like a Dore picture, white foam oozed from his lips, and with a shriek that is as plain in the ears today as it was that evening a dozen years ago, he fell—fell a good ten feet across the platform, prone on his face, barely missing by the fraction of an inch the post of a railing.

There was great difficulty in waking the young man, but it was accomplished finally by aid of the expert knowledge of the professor of